

Strong Bipartisan Support for NATO Ahead of 2026 Summit

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At the 2026 NATO Summit, allies are expected to focus on shifting the responsibility of defending Europe to European nations. The agenda builds off the 2025 summit in The Hague, Netherlands, where NATO's European leaders pledged to increase national defense spending levels to 5 percent of their GDP by 2035. European allies and Canada have since boosted defense [spending by 20 percent](#), exceeding the previous goal set at the 2014 summit of 2 percent.

This year's gathering in Ankara, Turkey, is complicated by additional intra-NATO tensions. The US administration has pushed European allies to take on a [far greater share](#) of responsibility of Europe's security and has been angered by what it sees as an [inadequate level of support](#) for the United States in its war with Iran. Meanwhile, US NATO allies are disturbed by the US administration's threats to annex Greenland, claims about making Canada the 51st US state, failure to consult with allies ahead of the US-Israeli combined large-scale operations against Iran, and inconsistent policies on a host of issues ranging from support for Ukraine to force posture in Europe.

New Chicago Council-Ipsos polling finds a majority of Americans remain supportive of NATO, broadly consistent with a five-decade trend. But fewer now than in 2025 are confident that European allies would help defend the United States if it came under attack. Still, agreement on the importance of the alliance runs across party lines, though Republicans are more apt to support unilateral action over an allied operation when military force is necessary.

Key Findings

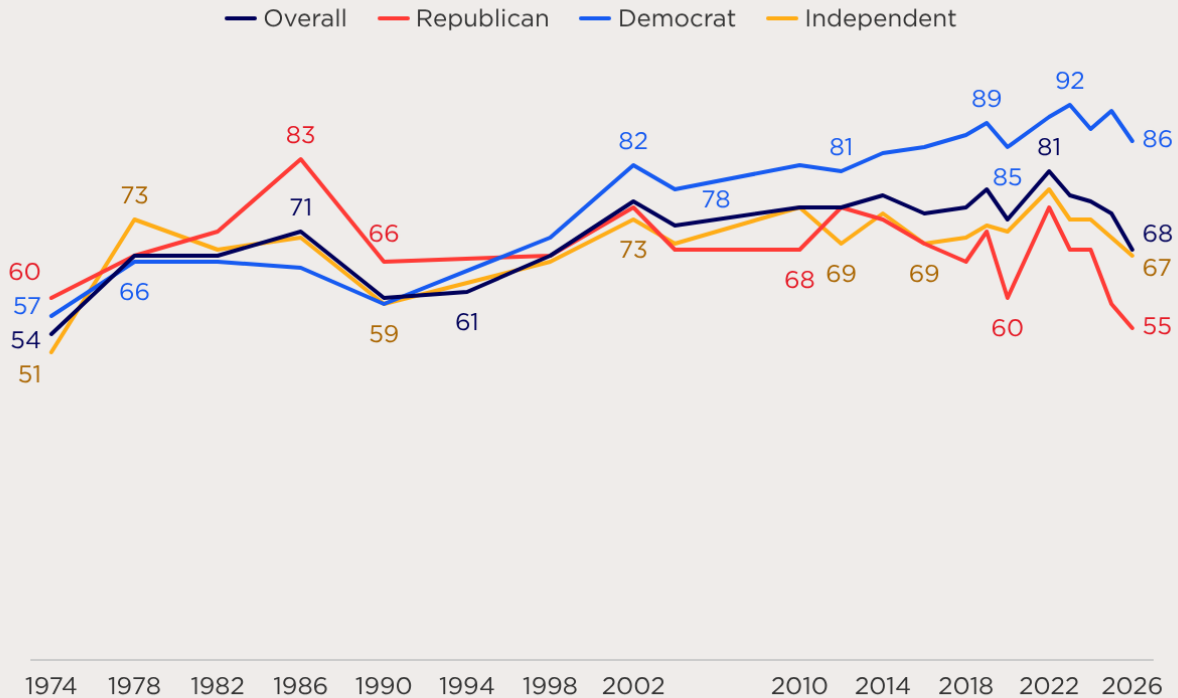
- Two-thirds of Americans say that the United States should either increase (25%) or maintain its commitment to NATO (43%, for a total of 68%).
- Majorities of Republicans (55%) and Democrats (61%) and a plurality of Independents (49%) say the US alliance with Europe puts the United States in a stronger position in the world, while about one in 10 across partisan affiliations say it makes the United States weaker (35% say it makes no difference).
- Americans prefer to maintain or increase the number of existing US troops in Germany (60%, up from 48 percent in 2019). A similar majority prefers to maintain or increase US forces in Poland (63%, up from 49 percent in 2019). About half of Americans (47%) say that if the United States is attacked, its European allies will come to its defense, down from 62 percent in 2025.
- A narrow majority of Americans believe US relations with European allies will improve with a new US presidential administration (51%). A quarter of Americans believe the relationship will remain the same as it was under prior administrations (24%). Just one in 10 say the relationship has been damaged beyond repair (12%).

Most Americans Say United States Should Maintain or Increase NATO Commitment

Two-thirds of Americans (68% total) say the United States should either increase (25%) or maintain (43%) its commitment to NATO. While a solid majority, it is a slight decrease from recent years and down from its peak of 81 percent in 2022. The last time this reading dropped below 72 percent was in 1998, before the September 11, 2001, attacks.

Commitment to NATO

Do you feel we should increase our commitment to NATO, keep our commitment what it is now, decrease our commitment to NATO, or withdraw from NATO entirely? (% increase + maintain)



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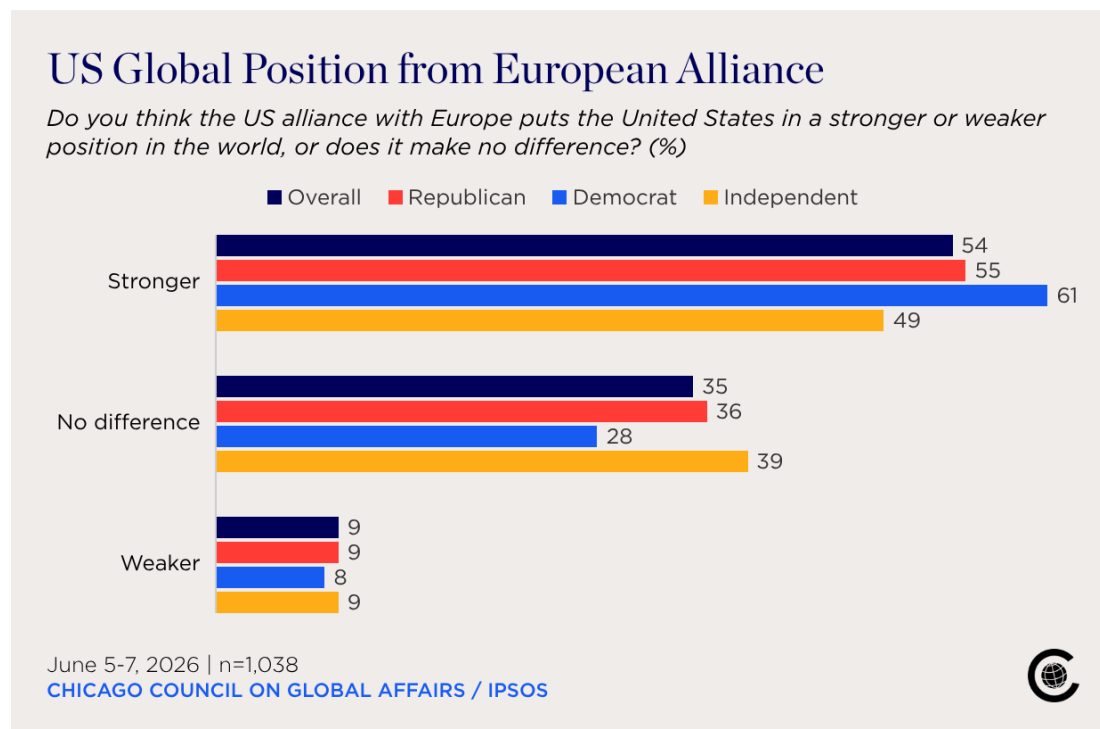
Prior to 2002, self-described Republican Party supporters were the most likely to favor maintaining or increasing the US commitment to NATO, buoying the overall level of American support for the alliance. A majority of Democrats and Independents were also supportive of the nation's commitment to the alliance but less ardent in their support. Today, however, the parties have switched places. Republican preferences are pulling down the overall average, with Democrats expressing the highest support for maintaining or increasing US commitment to NATO.

Partisan differences remain less related to the direction of support (given majority support across political affiliations) and more about varying levels of enthusiasm: 55 percent of Republicans endorse keeping US commitment at current levels or increasing it compared to 86 percent of Democrats and 67 percent of Independents. Notably, Democrats are significantly higher on increasing US commitment (44% vs. 7% of Republicans and 24% of Independents).

NATO Seen as Strengthening US Position in the World

Despite US President Donald Trump's harsh criticisms of the US alliance with Europe, majorities of Republicans (55%) and Democrats (61%) and a plurality of Independents (49%) say the alliance puts the United States in a stronger position in the world. About one in 10 across partisan affiliations say it makes the United States weaker. Still, significant minorities across political leanings say the US-European alliance makes no difference in US global standing (36% Republican, 28% Democrat, 39% Independent). These findings are consistent with the [2025 Chicago Council Survey](#), which found that most Americans believe US security alliances with allies in Europe benefit both the United States and its allies or the United States alone (a combined 69%).

Since 2017, Democrats have been the most emphatic NATO supporters (81%) though a full two-thirds of Independents also see benefits for the United States and its allies (67%) in the alliance. While Republican support dipped to half in 2023 (49%), majority support (57%) returned in 2025 and has held relatively steady. Today, more Republicans (55%) than Independents (49%) see the alliance as making the United States stronger.



US Public Supports Maintaining or Increasing US Troops in Germany, Poland

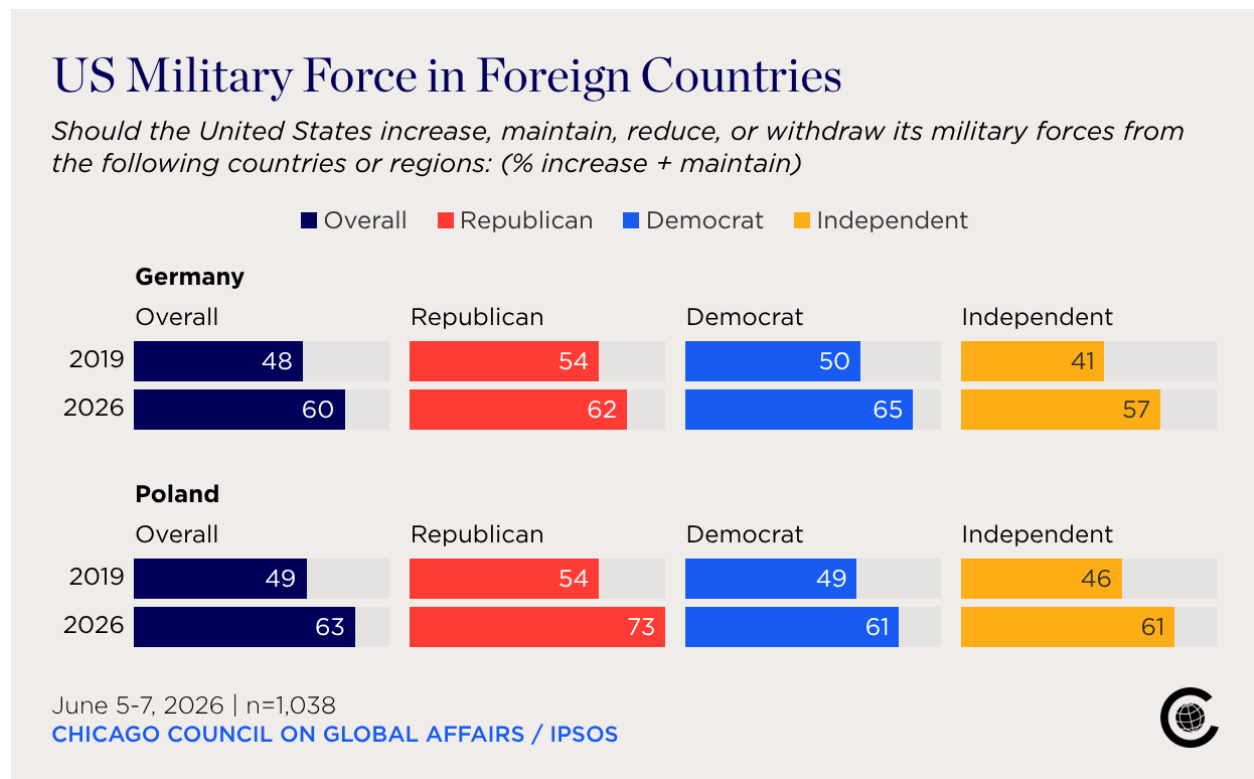
In 2026, the Trump administration has been reviewing US force posture in Europe to address burden sharing, recently announcing potential US troop

withdrawals from specific European countries, including Germany, Italy, and Spain.

More Americans today (60% total) prefer the US maintain (54%) or increase (6%) the number of existing US troops in Germany than 2019 (48% total). Further, there are relatively small differences between partisan groups on increasing/maintaining troop levels in the country, with Republicans (26%) slightly more inclined to say they prefer to reduce US forces in Germany than Independents (20%) or Democrats (16%).

Americans hold similar views on US military forces in Poland. Just over half (63%) of Americans prefer the US maintain (52%) its military forces in Poland and one in 10 would like to see an increase (11%) in US forces. Yet Republicans express higher support for maintaining troops (60%) than Democrats (49%) and Independents (51%) and are less likely to prefer withdrawing altogether (8% Republicans, 17% Democrats, 16% Independents). (See Appendix Figure 1).

Overall, about a third of Americans combined say they prefer the US reduce or withdraw troop levels in Germany (20% reduce, 14% withdraw) and Poland (16% reduce, 14% withdraw).



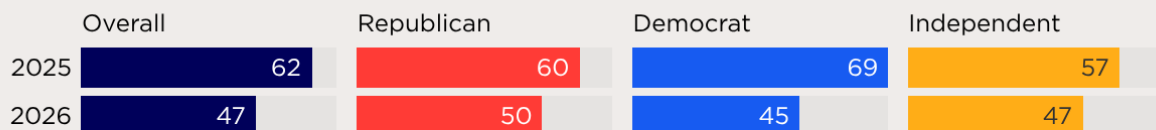
Americans Less Confident European Allies Will Defend the United States

A key benefit of NATO membership resides in the “collective defense” clause, which entails a [commitment](#) to come to the defense of an ally if it is attacked, as an attack on one is considered an attack on all. The only time the article has been invoked since NATO’s founding in 1949 was in response to the terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001.

Americans are less confident today that European allies would follow through on this commitment than they were a year ago. Fewer than half of Americans (47%) say they are very or somewhat confident that if the United States was attacked, European allies would come to the nation’s defense, down from 62 percent in 2025. Confidence has declined across partisan groupings, and especially among Democrats (-24 percentage points), no more than half of whom say they expect Europeans to come to the United States’ aid.

Confidence in Allied Defense

*How confident are you that if the United States is attacked, our **European** allies will come to our defense? (% very + somewhat confident)*



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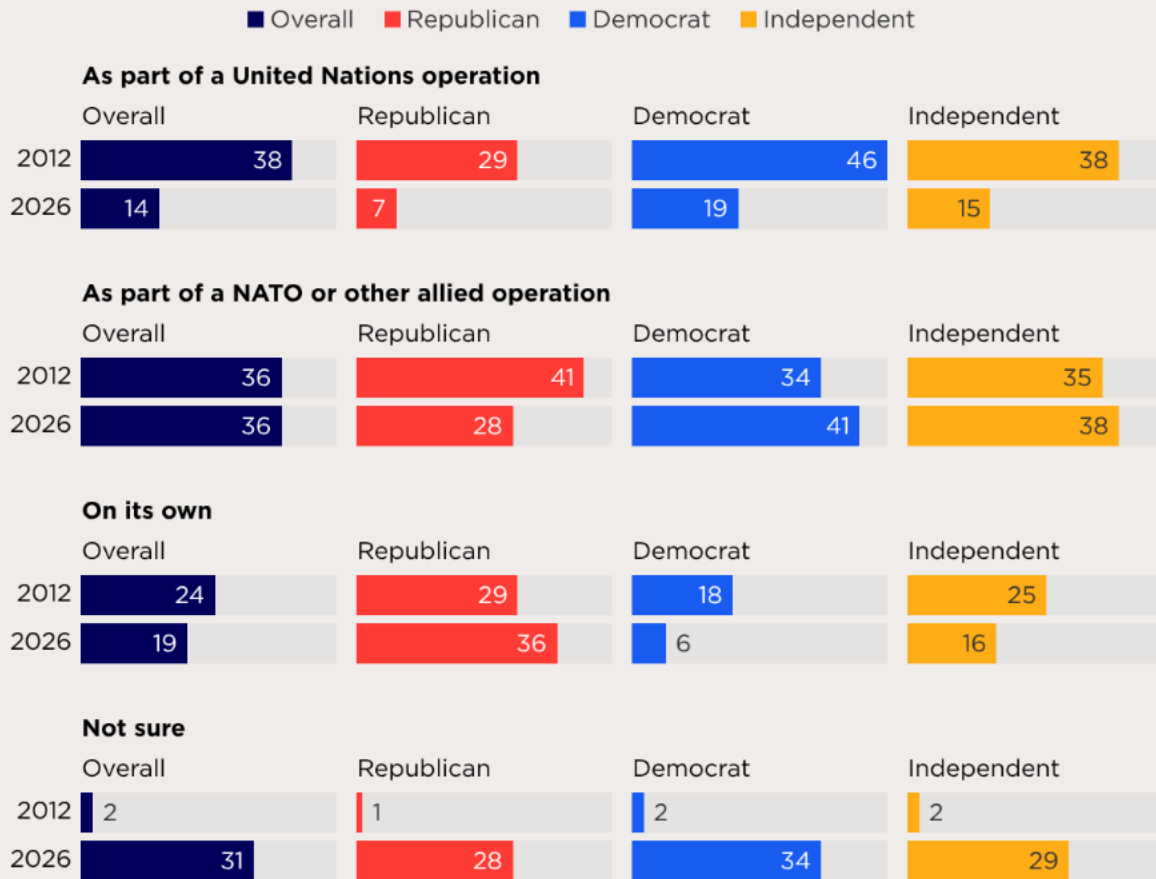


US Public Tends to Think Military Action Best Conducted Multilaterally

Generally speaking, a plurality of Americans would prefer that when military force is necessary, US leaders act as part of a NATO or other allied operation (36%) or as part of a UN operation (14%). Two in 10 say it would be best for the United States to act on its own (19%). When the question was last asked in 2012, support for conducting such operations within a UN framework was much more popular (38%, compared to just 14% today). And significantly more today (31%) than in 2012 (2%) say they are not sure what the general rule should be when it comes to deploying US military force.

US Action When Military Force Necessary

As a general rule, when it is necessary for the US to use military force, do you think it is best for the US to act: (%)



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Republicans have become as likely to say the United States should conduct military operations unilaterally (36%) as say it should be part of an allied or UN action (35% combined), while Democrats and Independents continue to lean toward a multinational arrangement.

Americans Tend to Believe Current US-European Tensions Are Temporary

While Americans seem to sense discontent from Europe about current US policies toward the continent, they have not given up hope that relationships will get better. A narrow majority of Americans believe US relations with European allies will improve with a new US presidential administration (51%). This is the prevailing view among Democrats (69%) and Independents (53%),

with 29 percent of Republicans in agreement. Meanwhile, a quarter of Americans believe the relationship remains the same as it was under prior administrations. This view is the primary one among Republicans (42%, compared to 20% of Independents and 12% of Democrats).

Relatively few Americans say transatlantic relations have improved compared to past presidential administrations (9% overall, with 19% Republicans, 7% Independents, 2% Democrats) or that relations are now beyond repair (12% overall, 15% each for Democrats and Independents, 7% Republicans).

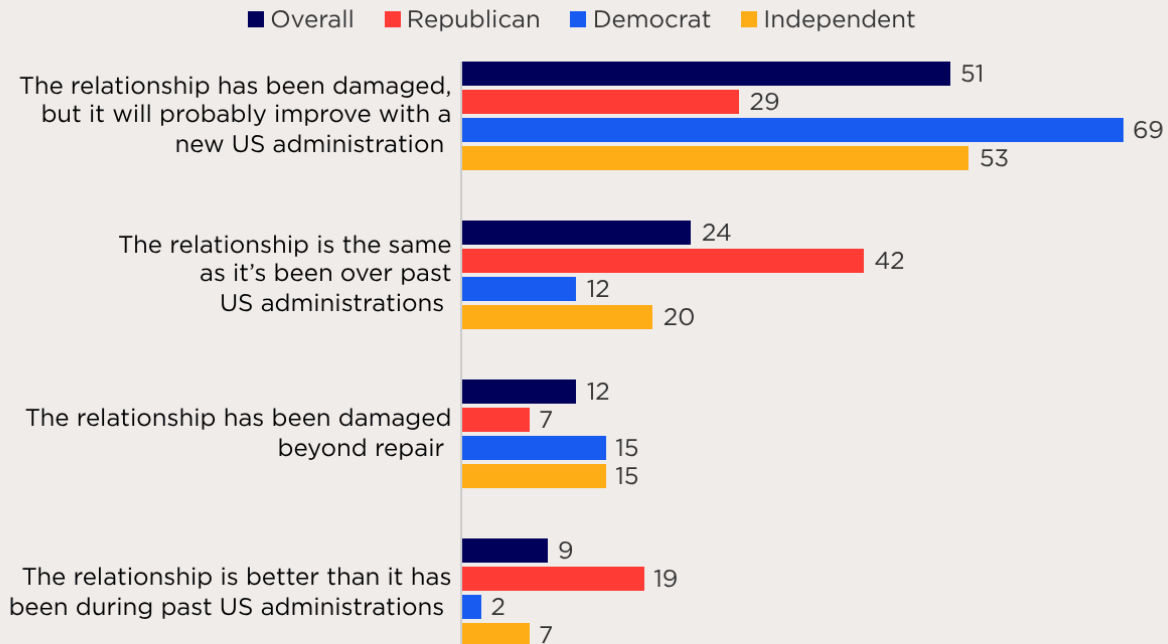
Americans Consider Alliances in General to be a Mutual “Win-Win”

Hope for improved transatlantic relations appears to rest partly upon a prevailing sense that US alliances are generally mutually advantageous for both the United States and its allies. A combined seven in 10 Americans see alliances as beneficial for both the United States and its allies (55%) or the United States alone (15%). Three in 10 believe that alliances mostly benefit allies alone (19%) or benefit neither party (10%).¹

¹ That said, fewer Democrats now (62%) than last year (72%) say that the United States and its allies both benefit from alliances, though the percentage of Democrats saying the United States alone benefits is similar to 2025 (14% vs. 11% in 2025). (See Appendix Figure 2).

Opinions on Current Relations With Europe

Which of the following best reflects your view about current relations between the United States and Europe: (%)



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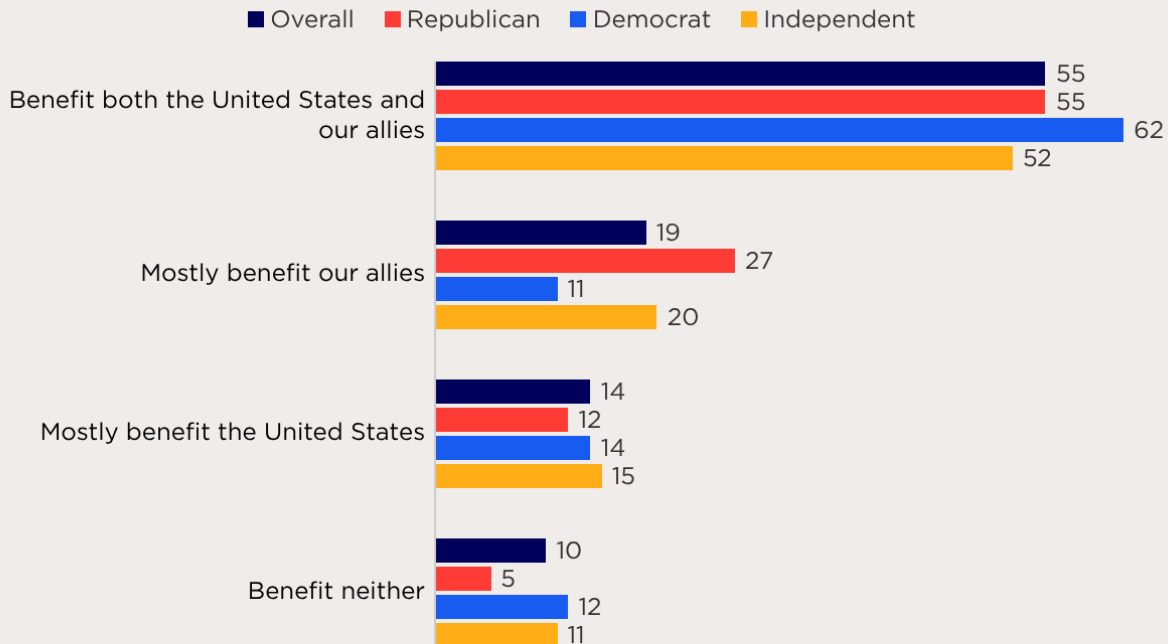
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An increasing percentage of Republicans align with the majority view, rising from 55 percent in 2024 to 66 percent today, perhaps in reaction to allies' willingness to meet President Trump's demands for greater defense spending and increased responsibility for Europe's security. Independents have also grown more likely to view the relationship as mutually beneficial (increasing from 62% in 2024 to 67% today). While Democrats grew more positive about the benefits for both the United States and its allies in 2025 (83%, up from 75% in 2024), somewhat fewer today share that view (76%, similar to 2024 levels). (See Appendix Figure 2).

Opinions on US Security Alliances

As you may know, the United States has security alliances with countries around the world. Which of the following comes closest to your view. Do they: (%)



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Conclusion

The NATO alliance has a storied history of [overcoming division](#). While member countries today may not be as united as they once were, the American public has maintained its belief in the benefits of NATO membership for the United States. While Republicans and Democrats may differ on the wisdom of multinational versus unilateral military actions, they share an appreciation for the alliance's value.

Americans also appear hopeful that US-European relations will improve. Polling from the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) shows Europeans are similarly optimistic about better transatlantic relations in the future. Notably, they support increasing national defense spending and want to develop European conventional—and nuclear—capabilities to defend the continent. This suggests that European publics are also invested in the alliance and willing to take actions that address US concerns over burden sharing.

Methodology

This poll was conducted by Ipsos from June 5 to 8, 2026, using the probability-based KnowledgePanel®. This poll is based on a nationally representative probability sample of 1,038 adults age 18 or older.

The study was conducted in English. The data for the total sample were weighted to adjust for gender by age, race/ethnicity, education, Census region, metropolitan status, and household income. The demographic benchmarks came from the 2025 March Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS).

Specific categories used were:

- Gender (Male, Female) by Age (18–29, 30–44, 45–59 and 60+)
- Race/Hispanic Ethnicity (White Non-Hispanic, Black Non-Hispanic, Other, Non-Hispanic, Hispanic, 2+ Races, Non-Hispanic)
- Education (Less than High School, High School, Some College, Bachelor or higher)
- Census Region (Northeast, Midwest, South, West)
- Metropolitan status (Metro, non-Metro)
- Household Income (Under \$25,000, \$25,000–\$49,999, \$50,000–\$74,999, \$75,000–\$99,999, \$100,000–\$149,999, \$150,000+)

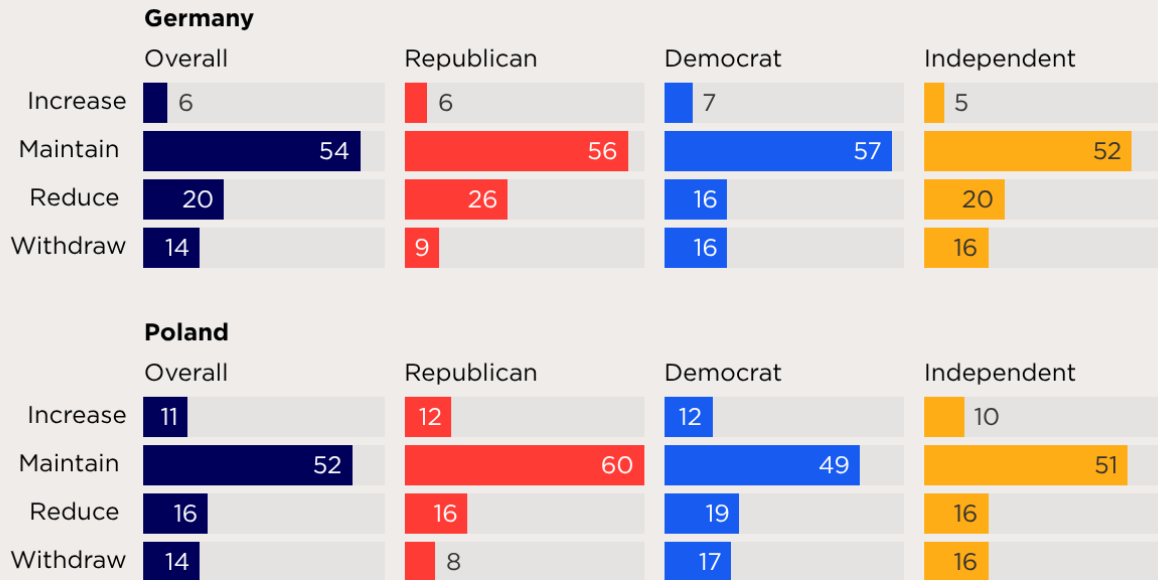
The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, for results based on the entire sample of adults. The margin of sampling error takes into account the design effect, which was 1.04.

Appendix

Appendix Figure 1: US Military Force in Foreign Countries

Should the United States increase, maintain, reduce, or withdraw its military forces from the following countries or regions: (%)

■ Overall ■ Republican ■ Democrat ■ Independent

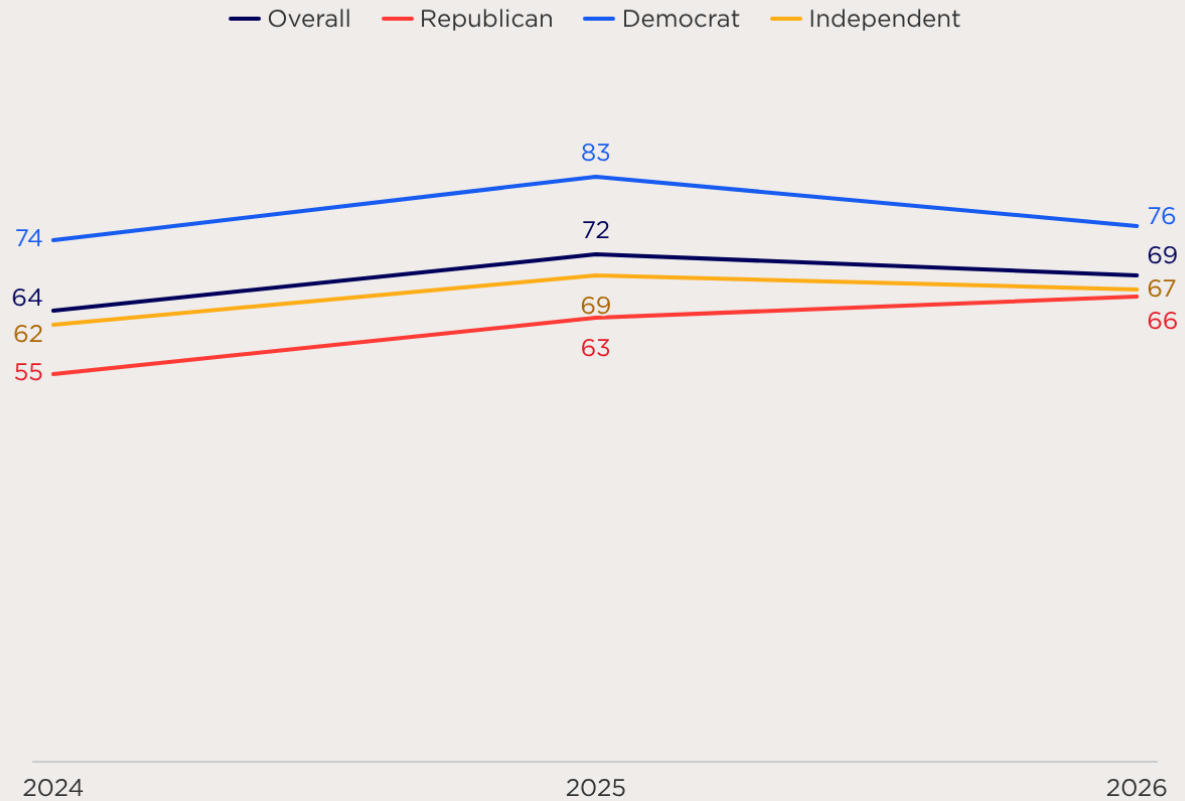


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Appendix Figure 2: Opinions on US Security Alliances

As you may know, the United States has security alliances with countries around the world. Which of the following comes closest to your view. Do they: (% Mostly benefit the United States + Benefit both the US and our allies)



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